

CLAIMS

1. A method of sending data over a communications network,
5 the method comprising the steps of

(a) an originating terminal generating a request for a
content server;

(b) the originating terminal dividing the request into
a plurality of packets;

10 (c) the originating terminal distributing the plurality
of packets to a first plurality of terminals over a first
network;

(d) the first plurality of terminals transmitting
packets received during step (c) to a reconstitution server
15 located in a second network, the first plurality of terminals
being connected to the second network by a second plurality
of connections;

(e) the reconstitution server receiving the plurality
of packets and sending the plurality of packets to the
20 content server.

2. A method according to claim 1, comprising the further
steps of:

(f) the content server sending content data to the
25 reconstitution server in response to the request received in
step (e), the data being sent as a plurality of content data
packets;

(g) the reconstitution server distributing the
plurality of content data packets to the first plurality of
30 terminals over the second plurality of connections;

(h) the first plurality of terminals sending the
plurality of content data packets to the originating
terminal; and

(i) the originating terminal receiving the plurality of content data packets to re-create the content data.

3. A method according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein in
5 step (c) and/or step (g), the plurality of packets are distributed to the first plurality of terminals in a round-robin basis.

4. A method according to claim 3, wherein the round-robin
10 distribution of the plurality of packets is weighted.

5. A method according to claim 4, whereon the round-robin weighting is determined in accordance with the bandwidth of the connection between the terminal and the second network.
15

6. A communications network comprising;
a first plurality of terminals, the terminals being connected by a first network and having a second plurality of connections to a second network,

20 the second network comprising a reconstitution server and a plurality of content servers,

wherein, in use,

an originating terminal generates a request for one of the content servers, divides the request into a plurality of
25 packets and distributes the plurality of packets between the first plurality of terminals via the first network,

the plurality of packets are sent to the reconstitution server via the second plurality of connections, the reconstitution server sending the plurality of packets to the
30 content server.

7. A communications network according to claim 6, wherein, in use,

the content server sends content data to the reconstitution server in the form of a plurality of content data packets,

the reconstitution server distributes the plurality of content data packets between the first plurality of terminals over the second plurality of connections,

the first plurality of terminals distributing the plurality of content data packets to the originating terminal;

the originating terminal receiving the plurality of content data packets and re-creating the content data.

8. A communications network according to claim 6 or claim 7, wherein the first plurality of terminals is greater than the second plurality of connections.

9. A communications network according to claim 6 or claim 7, wherein the first plurality of terminals is less than the second plurality of connections.

10. A communications network according to any of claims 6 to 9, wherein each of the first plurality of terminals comprises a list identifying the other active terminals.

11. A communications network according to claim 10, wherein, in use, each active terminal periodically sends a first status message to the other terminals to indicate that it is active.

12. A communications network according to claim 10 or claim 11, wherein an active terminal sends a second status message to the other terminals prior to becoming inactive.

13. A reconstitution server, the server, in use, receiving a plurality of packets from a first plurality of terminals and sending the plurality of packets to a content server identified by a request.

5

14. A reconstitution server according to claim 13, the server, in use, receiving a plurality of content data packets from a content server in response to the request and distributing the plurality of content data packets between
10 the first plurality of terminals.

15. A reconstitution server according to claim 13 or claim 14, wherein the reconstitution server is in communication with the first plurality of terminals via a second plurality
15 of connections.